

Cockton Hill Junior School

Address: McIntyre Terrace, Cockton Hill, Bishop Auckland, County Durham, DL14 6HW

Unique reference number (URN): 114110

Inspection report: 3 March 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have established consistent routines to encourage pupils to attend school regularly and to be punctual. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' attendance and staff reinforce these consistently well. Leaders take swift and effective action to address low attendance. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved. Few pupils are persistently absent from school.

The school has a positive, friendly atmosphere. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful. Pupils feel safe and happy. Bullying and discriminatory behaviour are rare. Pupils say that when incidents do occur, they feel confident to speak with a trusted adult. Pupils know that concerns will be dealt with effectively. Behaviour during social times is cordial. Pupils play and cooperate well when playing games together. They value the wide range of activities available on the playground, including the large sandpit, which they call 'the beach'.

Classroom routines are well understood and generally followed. Pupils begin work promptly and typically engage well in lessons. Most pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Staff are trained to take a consistent approach to helping pupils to manage their behaviour and emotions. Pupils benefit from this support. They remember useful strategies to help them to make positive choices.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders work effectively with external agencies, parents and carers to ensure that they accurately identify any challenges that may affect pupils' learning or wellbeing. This process helps leaders get to know pupils well. Pupils who join the school midway through the year, sometimes from another country, are quickly made to feel welcome. Leaders work well with the local authority to provide effective support for pupils who are new to speaking English.

Leaders have a sharp oversight of key pupil groups, such as those eligible for pupil premium funding, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those known, or previously known, to children's social care. Leaders' systems to assess the impact of the support that these pupils receive are typically robust. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to achieve their potential, regardless of any barriers to their learning. As such, leaders ensure that staff generally have the support and expertise that they need to adapt their teaching appropriately.

Leaders use additional funding, for example pupil premium funding, to identify and reduce barriers to pupils' learning or wellbeing. Leaders work extensively with families, professionals and a range of specialist services to inform the support that pupils receive.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have demonstrated a sharp focus on addressing the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. When appropriate, they have worked effectively with the local

authority and other external professionals to secure these improvements, including ensuring that the curriculum is logically ordered. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching. They have taken purposeful action to make the improvements needed and to develop the expertise of staff through effective professional development. This has begun to make a positive impact. For example, the teaching of mathematics and reading has begun to improve. Nevertheless, leaders' work to ensure that teaching is consistently effective is ongoing.

Governors know the school and local community well. They share leaders' high expectations of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Governors share leaders' commitment to ensuring that decisions are made in pupils' best interests. Governors have a thorough understanding of their role, including their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. They have an accurate understanding of where improvement is needed to raise pupils' achievement and develop the quality of teaching. However, at times, governors do not have the information that they need to rigorously check that leaders' actions have the intended impact and benefit all pupils. This hinders how effectively they support and challenge leaders to continue to improve the school.

Leaders are considerate of staff workload and wellbeing. During the inspection, comments from staff reflected their pride in working at the school. They are well informed about the school's strengths and priorities for development. This helps staff to feel part of leaders' journey to improve.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have put in place a well-considered programme for pupils' personal development. This programme, together with a range of wider experiences, supports pupils to be well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Most pupils develop a suitable understanding of the knowledge that they learn through the curriculum for personal, social and health education and relationships and health education. For example, pupils talk respectfully about other faiths and cultures. They know that it is important to treat everyone equally and fairly. Leaders have ensured that pupils know how to keep safe when online. Most pupils can explain how to resolve conflict. They learn how to look after their mental wellbeing. Typically, pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships, including consent.

Pupils talk fondly about their school. They speak warmly about welcoming pupils who are new to the school and to the country. Pupils form friendships quickly, which reflects the school's inclusive culture. They celebrate and respect differences between people. Members of the pupil parliament groups demonstrate a deep knowledge of the fundamental British Values. They act as positive role models for other pupils in the school. This helps all pupils to understand and enact these values. For example, pupils understand democracy and appreciate opportunities to put this into practice in school. In addition, pupils benefit from opportunities to develop their confidence and character, such as singing at a local care home.

Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the full range of opportunities available. Leaders remove barriers to

participation so that all pupils can benefit from the same offer, including sports and music clubs.

Leaders hold termly career mornings to develop pupils' understanding of different jobs and professions. Visitors include local professionals, parents and carers, and former pupils.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Some pupils do not secure the foundational knowledge that they need to write fluently and accurately. This limits their ability to communicate their ideas clearly across the curriculum.

Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics over time has not been as high as it should be. There was some improvement in pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics in tests at the end of Year 6 in 2025. Nevertheless, pupils' attainment typically remains below the national average. Disadvantaged pupils continue to have gaps in their knowledge of reading, writing and number.

Pupils' knowledge of different subjects is variable. Teachers do not have a clear picture of what pupils know and do not know. In some subjects, pupils struggle to remember their learning and the quality of their written work is inconsistent. Leaders have an accurate understanding of these weaknesses and are taking appropriate steps to improve pupils' achievement. This work is in the early stages and the impact is not currently evident in how well pupils' achieve.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have not ensured that teaching is consistently effective in different subjects. Recently, leaders have taken suitable action to improve teaching, particularly of reading, writing and mathematics. However, leaders' work to improve the teaching of writing is at an early stage. Staff do not ensure that pupils secure important knowledge, such as spelling and handwriting. This hinders pupils' ability to communicate their understanding in writing effectively. Assessment in wider subjects is not well established, so teachers do not have a clear picture of what pupils know. This means that some pupils do not build knowledge as securely as they should.

Leaders' actions to improve the teaching of reading and mathematics have begun to make a positive impact. In mathematics, for example, staff address any gaps in pupils' knowledge before moving on to new content. This helps pupils to tackle increasingly complex problems. Leaders prioritise reading. Pupils particularly enjoy story time at the end of each day. Leaders ensure that pupils who need extra support, for example in phonics, are helped to catch up.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad, ambitious and logically ordered in all subjects. It is designed to help pupils to develop secure knowledge and skills that build on

what they already know. Staff are adept at adapting their teaching to ensure that pupils with any barriers to their learning can access the curriculum.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are happy at this welcoming and nurturing school. They attend regularly. Leaders and staff are ambitious for all pupils to achieve highly, regardless of their personal circumstances or any barriers to learning. Leaders work well with parents and carers and external professionals to understand any barriers to pupils' learning. In lessons, pupils benefit from a range of support, such as personalised resources, that helps them to access the curriculum successfully.

Pupils enjoy their learning and generally try hard in lessons. However, variability in teaching mean that pupils do not learn as successfully as they should. This is reflected in pupils' achievement in national tests at the end of Year 6, which has been inconsistent over time. In 2025, attainment in reading and mathematics began to improve as a result of leaders' work to raise standards. However, pupils, including some who are disadvantaged, do not achieve as well as they should in writing. This means that they are not as well prepared as they should be for their next steps.

Pupils are part of a school community that celebrates difference. They warmly welcome any pupils who are new to the school or country. Pupils settle quickly in school and feel like they belong. Pupils behave well. Bullying is rare. Staff are quick to sort out any problems that may arise. Staff know pupils well and make sure that their individual needs are met. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupils learn about the importance of developing healthy and respectful relationships. Older pupils are positive role models for younger pupils. Pupils enjoy the activities that are available at social times. The outdoor play programme supports them to develop independence and social skills. Pupils enthusiastically take on roles and responsibilities, such as being members of pupil parliament groups. These help pupils to make valuable contributions to the school and to learn about democracy.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to increase the proportion of pupils who attain well at the end of Year 6, particularly in writing, so that pupils are well prepared for their next steps.
 - Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is taught consistently well across all subjects and year groups, and assessment systems are used purposefully, so that pupils gain a secure knowledge and understanding of each subject.
 - Governors should ensure that they receive suitable information about the impact of leaders' recent actions to improve the curriculum and teaching, so that they can help to drive further improvements at pace.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Claire Bonas.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other school leaders, teachers, support staff, pupils and some parents and carers during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke to representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector spoke to the school's local authority school improvement adviser.

The school makes use of one alternative provision, which is unregistered.

Since the last inspection, several new governors have been appointed to the school's governing body. There is also a new chair of governors.

Headteacher: Jill Cooper

Lead inspector:

Kathryn McDonald, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Amy Blackburn, His Majesty's Inspector

Deborah Ashcroft, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 3 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

203

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

244

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

56.65%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.45%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

24.14%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	43%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	54%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	41%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	33%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	57%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	65%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	47%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	60%	73%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	65%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	63%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	69%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	61%	71%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	51%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	65%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	51%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	37%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	37%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	48%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	32%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	32%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	49%	62%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	52%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	37%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	64%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	61%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	55%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	64%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	46%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	59%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	36%	59%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	37%	68%	-31 pp
2024/25 (revised)	48%	69%	-21 pp
2023/24 (final)	32%	67%	-36 pp
2022/23 (final)	32%	66%	-34 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	49%	80%	-30 pp
2024/25 (revised)	52%	81%	-29 pp
2023/24 (final)	37%	80%	-43 pp
2022/23 (final)	64%	78%	-14 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	61%	78%	-17 pp
2024/25 (revised)	55%	78%	-23 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	78%	-14 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	64%	77%	-13 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	46%	80%	-33 pp
2024/25 (revised)	59%	81%	-22 pp
2023/24 (final)	45%	79%	-35 pp
2022/23 (final)	36%	79%	-43 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	5.4%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.6%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.8%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	14.6%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	15.2%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	22.9%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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